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ABSTRACT

This lesson plan teaches students about the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. Students listen to a brief biography, view photographs of the March on Washington, hear a portion of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and discuss what King's words mean to them. Finally, they will create picture books about their own dreams of freedom for Americans today. After its 4 lessons, students will have: (1) learned about the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr.; (2) reflected on a section of his "I Have a Dream" speech; and (3) become aware of inequities that still exist in the United States. Intended for grades K-2, the plan notes subject areas covered (language arts, literature, United States history and social studies), time required to complete the lesson, skills used and taught in the lesson, and the standards developed by professional associations or governments that are related to the lesson. Activities to extend the lesson and further resources conclude the lesson plan. (SR)

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Dr. King's Dream

Introduction

Walk with Martin Luther King, Jr. on his historic March on Washington, hear his inspirational "I Have a Dream" speech, and envision your own dreams of freedom for all Americans.

In this lesson, students will learn about the life and work of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Students will listen to a brief biography, view photographs of the March on Washington, hear a portion of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and discuss what King's words mean to them. Finally, they will create picture books about their own dreams of freedom for Americans today.

For background information on the topics included in this lesson, see the resource list at the bottom of this lesson plan. You might begin by visiting the Seattle Times's Martin Luther King Jr. site, which can be reached through the EDSITEment-reviewed Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project website.

Guiding Questions:

- What do we mean by the term "civil rights?
- Who was Martin Luther King, Jr., and how did he fight for civil rights?
- What can we learn from the words of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech?
- What parts of Dr. King's dream have or have not been realized in the present day?

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will have:

- learned about the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- reflected on a section of King's "I Have a Dream" speech
- become aware of inequities that still exist in the United States

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SEARCH EDSITEMENT

SUBJECT AREAS ▸

Literature & Language Arts: American

Literature & Language Arts: Poetry

History & Social Studies: United States: African-American

GRADE LEVELS ▸

K-2

TIME REQUIRED ▸

Step 1: One 45-minute class period

Steps 2-3: One 45-minute class period

Step 4: One to two class periods, 45 minutes each

Extending the Lesson: One to two class periods, 45 minutes each

SKILLS ▸

observation and description
historical analysis
creative writing
visual art

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT ▸

Curriculum Standards for Literature & Language

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Lesson Plan

1 Who Was Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Before the lesson, explore what students already know about Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. Draw a "bubble map" on the board with Dr. King's name in the center bubble; as you elicit students' prior knowledge, write the words and phrases that they associate with Dr. King in smaller bubbles around the center.

Next, read the class a short biography of Dr. King. *A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, by D.A. Adler (New York: Holiday House, 1989) offers an accessible overview of King's life, while portions of *If You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King*, by Ellen Levine (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1994) could be used to provide historical context.

You and your students can visit historic sites relevant to the life of Dr. King through the EDSITEment-reviewed website We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement. Click for a picture of King's birthplace. Under "Georgia," click on "Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site." Additional information about King's birthplace can be accessed through the National Park Service.

Finally, remind students of some of the other people who worked to extend the American dream to all Americans (e.g., Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Jackie Robinson, Malcolm X). Students may already have some knowledge of these historical figures from previous units of study. Briefly discuss each of these figures' contributions to the battle for civil rights, pointing out that Dr. King's work was part of a lengthy struggle that continues to this day.

2 What Was the March on Washington?

Explain to students what the March on Washington was. Tell them that its full title was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, that it was held on August 28, 1963, and that thousands of Americans from all walks of life attended it. Let students know that although Dr. King emphasized the struggles of African-Americans, he devoted his life to the freedom of all Americans. As long as even one of us was not free, he believed, none of us could be truly free.

In order to gain a sense of the magnitude and power of the march, as well as the wide diversity of Americans who attended it, students may view photographs from the extensive collection available through the EDSITEment-reviewed Digital Classroom website. On the left-hand side of the screen, you will see a list entitled "Other NARA Sites for Primary Sources." Select "NAIL" from this list. Now click on "Search for Archival Holdings." Next, click on "NAIL Digital Copies Search." In the blank space next to the instruction "Enter Keywords," type in the words "March on Washington." Scroll down the boxed list titled "Media" and select "Photographs and Graphic Materials." Finally, click on "Display Results" to view more than eighty photographs from the March on Washington. Click on the button that says "More Hits" to move to the next page.

If you have limited computer access in your classroom, you may want to print out some photographs to distribute to students. To make a copy, click on the desired photograph and hold your cursor down until a list of options appears. After selecting "Copy this image," you may post the image into a word processing document and print it out as you

Arts

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics). (more)
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (more)
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. (more)
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (more)

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

2. Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time, so that the learner can:
    - identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others (more)
6. Power, Authority and Governance: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance, so that the learner can:
    - recognize and give examples of the tensions between

would any other document.

As they view the photographs, ask students to take special note of the variety of people represented. What do they think motivated each of these people to attend the march?

3 The Power of Dr. King's Words

Ask students if they have ever heard Dr, King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which he delivered at the March on Washington. Read aloud to them from the final section of Dr. King's speech, the full text of which is available through the EDSITEment-reviewed Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project website. After accessing the speech from the opening page of the website, scroll down to the final section of the speech, beginning with the words, "I say to you today, my friends [applause], so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream..."

For a picture of King delivering his speech, visit We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement. Under "Washington, DC" click on "Lincoln Memorial." If you wish to share the speech with your students in picture book form, a beautifully illustrated edition is available (King, M.L. [1997], I Have a Dream, New York: Scholastic Press).

After students have listened to the speech, ask them which of Dr. King's words or phrases especially stood out to them, and why. Write these phrases on the board and discuss their meanings.

4 The Dream Lives On

Talk with students about some of the inequities that persist in American society today. Do they think all Americans are truly free? Why or why not? (Students might reflect on the plights of homeless people, for example, or speak up about ways in which they or people they know feel unfree due to skin color, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status or gender.) Of what types of freedom would Dr. King dream if he were alive today? List students' ideas in a "bubble map" on the board.

Finally, have students create picture books, in which they begin each sentence with the words, "I have a dream of freedom for..." Students who are stuck for ideas may refer to the master list on the board.

Extending the Lesson

ers about their dreams of freedom: What does "freedom" mean to these family members? In what ways do they consider themselves free or not free? What kinds of freedom do they think Dr. King would want for all Americans if he were alive today? Students may then incorporate these dreams into their picture books.

In order to gain a fuller picture of King's life, you and your students might wish to read some of the letters he wrote as a child, which are included in Volume I of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project. Click to access the letters. A letter to his father dated January 18, 1940 mentions eleven-year-old King's involvement in Boy Scouts, for example, while another dated June 23, 1940 describes activities at Ebenezer Baptist Church. In letters to his parents dated June 11, June 15, and June 18, 1944, fifteen-year-old King remarks upon the lack of segregation in Connecticut, where he was working on a farm for the summer. After reading the letters, ask students to reflect on some of the ways that King's childhood was similar to or different from their

the wants and needs of individuals and groups, and concepts such as fairness, equity, and justice (more)

10. Civic Ideals and Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic, so that the learner can:
    - identify the key ideals of the United States' democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law, and discuss their application in specific situations
    - recognize and interpret how the "common good" can be strengthened through various forms of citizen action (more)

Curriculum Standards for The Arts

Visual Arts

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes:
    - Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories (more)
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas:
    - Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art
    - Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning (more)

View your state's standards

own. You might also discuss how King's experiences of segregation in the south and integration in the north fueled his later dreams of equality for people all across America.

Links to EDSITEment Participating Websites

The Digital Classroom
Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project
We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement

Additional Resources

The following resources can be reached through links available from EDSITEment-reviewed websites.

The EDSITEment-reviewed Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project website includes hotlinks to the following resources:

- the Seattle Times page on Martin Luther King Jr. (www.seattletimes.com/mlk)
- photo exhibitions compiled by Life Magazine (www.lifemag.com/Life/mlk/mlk.html) and the George Eastman House (www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/moore/mooreIndex.shtml)
- learning activities for young children available through the National Park Service's Martin Luther King, Jr. Online Visiting Information Center (www.nps.gov/malu/frames/framespa.htm)

The EDSITEment-reviewed We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement website includes an online bibliography (www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/learnmor1.htm) that lists print resources for adults as well as books for young readers that could be used to prepare for or to extend this lesson.